REMARKS

Claims 2, 4 and 5 are amended by incorporating the subject matter of claims 26, 27 and 28, respectively, and claims 26, 27 and 28 are canceled.

Claims 2, 4 and 5 are further amended by deleting an acidic group as a group at the side chain of the structure represented by formula (I).

Claim 25 is amended to correct a minor informality by deleting a period in the second line from the end of the claim.

Claims 29, 30 and 31 are amended to change their dependencies in view of the cancellation of claims 26, 27 and 28.

No new matter is presented.

Accordingly, upon entry of the Amendment, claims 2-15, 18-25 and 29-31 will be all of the claims pending in the application.

I. Response to Claim Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 2-15 and 18-31 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Tan et al (JP 11-038635) in view of Kawauchi (EP 0 992 850 A2).

Applicants respectfully submit that the cited references do not teach or suggest the presently claimed invention, whether taken alone or in combination.

Independent claims 2, 4 and 5 are amended herein to recite that the specific polymer contained in the intermediate layer of the claimed planographic printing plate includes a structure represented by formula (I), (Ia) or (Ib), has an onium group in a side chain thereof and further comprises a structure derived from a monomer selected from substituted or non-substituted acrylates or methacrylates.

Thus, the amended specific polymer in the intermediate layer in each of independent claims 2, 4 and 5 is characterized in that the polymer has all of the following features a) to c):

a) a specific structure represented by formula (I), (I-a) or (I-b);

b) an onium group at its side chain; and

c) a structure derived from a monomer selected from substituted or non-substituted acrylates or methacrylates.

The planographic printing plate precursor which includes the amended specific polymer in the intermediate layer exhibits even further improved effects of the invention. This is clearly shown in Examples 5 to 8 and 10 described in the specification, which respectively employ the specific polymer recited in amended claims 2, 4 and 5, i.e., P-11, P-12 or P-21, in the intermediate layer.

To explain in more detail, the reasons for the improved effects provided by the inclusion of the aforementioned c), which is added by the present amendment, in the specific polymer contained in the intermediate later are as discussed in the following paragraphs (1) to (3).

(1) By introducing a relatively hydrophobic structure such as described in paragraph c) above into the polymer, the affinity between the intermediate layer and the recording layer is increased, whereby printing durability can be improved.

(2) By introducing a relatively hydrophobic structure such as described in paragraph c) above into the polymer, the solubility of the polymer in a coating solvent is increased, whereby coating ability is improved and precipitation becomes less likely to occur upon volatilization of the solvent in a drying step after the coating is carried out. As a result, in a case

where the specific polymer as recited in amended claims 2, 4, and 5 is used, uniform formation of the intermediate layer becomes possible, and printing durability is improved even more.

(3) Further, due to the fact that the structure represented by Formula (I), (I-a) or (I-b) in the specific polymer is a structure exhibiting strong adhesion to the support, it is possible to achieve both good printing durability and good scumming properties at the same time even when a relatively hydrophobic structure such as described in paragraph c) above is introduced into the polymer.

In contrast, Tan et al and Kawauchi et al merely describe that the (meth)acrylic acid esters described in these references can be used as copolymerization components in the polymers disclosed therein, and there is no disclosure or suggestion in these references regarding the relationship with the further improved effects that are realized due to the inclusion of a structure derived from a (meth)acrylic acid ester (i.e., the aforementioned structure described in paragraph c) above) in the polymer.

In view of the above, one of ordinary skill in the art would not have reasonably expected to achieve the effects of the present invention, particularly with respect to obtaining both good printing durability and good scumming properties at the same time even when a relatively hydrophobic structure such as described in paragraph c) above is introduced into the polymer as discussed in paragraph (3) above.

Therefore, inclusion of the above features of paragraphs a), b) and c) in a polymer contained in the intermediate layer in order to achieve the further improved effects, (particularly, improvement in printing durability and similar improvement even after passage of time), such as

disclosed in the present specification, would not have been obvious to a person skilled in the art based on a combination of Tan and Kawauchi et al.

Accordingly, the present invention is patentable over the cited references and Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the §103 rejection.

II. Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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